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## School journal with Magazine Factory

Elomaa, Jarmo

European Commission, FICTUP project  
2010

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[http://fictup.inpl-nancy.fr/pages/School\\_children%e2%80%99s\\_Web\\_journal.html](http://fictup.inpl-nancy.fr/pages/School_children%e2%80%99s_Web_journal.html) >

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## SCHOOL JOURNAL WITH MAGAZINE FACTORY

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## 1. General information

Release history	
Created	27.4.2009
Lastly updated	13.3.2010
Authors	
School name, City, Country	Koulumestarin koulu, Espoo, Finland
Teacher's name	Jarmo Elomaa
Teaching level	Primary school
Researchers' names	Minna Lakkala and Liisa Ilomäki, University of Helsinki
Pedagogical sequence/unit	
Subject(s)	Native language, Writing, Production of digital material
Class level	5 <sup>th</sup> grade, age 11-12 years
Duration of sequence/unit	Beforehand one lesson about using digital camera. Two lessons per week reserved for making the web magazine; 12 lessons in all. During the writing and photographing period, pupils work also on their free-time.
ICT tool(s)	
Name 1	Magazine Factory
Official website 1	<a href="http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/">http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/</a>
Tool type 1	Publishing tool/Web-based service
Name 2	Interactive whiteboard
Name 3	Digital camera
Name 4	Windows application Notepad
Tool type 4	Writing tool
Description of the sequence/unit	
Objectives of the teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning the principles of publishing web journals and practicing the work of editorial staff.</li> <li>• Developing skills for creating and elaborating digital material: writing skills, digital photographing, combining text and pictures with a publishing tool.</li> <li>• Getting acquainted with the principles and laws of copyright.</li> <li>• Evaluating one's own working process and outcomes.</li> </ul>
Description of the phases of the sequence	<b>Phase 1:</b> Preparatory activities. One lesson about using digital camera. The teacher orders usernames and passwords for pupils to Magazine Factory. The user accounts are sent for pupils by email. All pupils get a status of editorial staff in the school's journal.

	<p><b>Phase 2:</b> Orientation to the task. Examination of existing web journals and their characteristics. The teacher introduces the ways of working and organizes pupil groups. Logging into the Magazine Factory program.</p> <p><b>Phase 3:</b> Starting the group work. Groups brainstorm topics for journal articles. Agreements through a whole class discussion are made about the main sections of the journal. The teacher guides pupils to the brainstorming activity and construction of a mind map. Groups choose their topics and start creating ideas in a mind map.</p> <p><b>Phase 4:</b> Creating articles through process writing. The teacher guides pupils to write the first version of their article using Notepad. Pupils comment on the first versions by giving feedback reciprocally between two groups. After that, the groups continue finishing their articles. This phase continues according to each group's own pace and progressing from this phase to the next is flexible.</p> <p><b>Phase 5:</b> Taking pictures for the articles. This phase continues interlocked with the previous one so that each group is introduced to photographing when their article texts are ready. The teacher guides the groups to use a digital camera, after which the pupils leave for photographing independently. Likewise, the teacher guides one group at a time to move the photos from the camera to a computer and further to the publishing tool.</p> <p><b>Phase 6:</b> Publishing the articles. The teacher guides each group at a time to combine texts and photos as an article in the school's journal using the publishing program.</p> <p><b>Phase 7:</b> Evaluation. First the pupils evaluate in small groups their own article and other articles. In a whole class discussion each group tells their evaluation of their own work, after which other pupils give their feedback about each article. In addition, the whole working process is reflected on: pupils tell what aspects were good and what aspects could have been improved. The teacher writes pupils' comments on the interactive whiteboard. In the end, each pupil evaluates his or her own contribution in the process through raising a hand for answering each evaluation question.</p>
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## 2. Introduction

### Pedagogical context

The pupils' familiarity with the working methods and pedagogical approach used:

- The purpose of the example project was to acquaint pupils with the publishing of (web) journals, process writing, the basics of digital photographing, and evaluation of one's own work. The unit as such was new for the pupils. They did not have previous experience of writing journal articles, commenting on each other's texts or usage of digital camera in school work.

The pupils' experience of using ICT in general and the specific tools:

- General ICT skills that pupils should have for the project are: logging in the computer, basic skills of text editing, basic skills of using the Internet (opening a browser, logging in the web-based environment, using web pages) and the usage of email.
- In the example project, all students had adequate basic skills that were enough for the project work. The teacher had some goals for improving students' ICT skills through the project (e.g., the usage of the publishing program and digital cameras). These skills were taught for student groups so that pupils continued their actual publishing work and the teacher gave advice in necessary new skills when needed during the process.

The pupils' knowledge and skills related to the topic/subject domains:

- Because the topics of pupils' articles were based on pupils' own interests and choices, there was no need to master any specific domain knowledge.
- The pupils mastered the required group work skills and were familiar with practices of working on a shared task.
- The pupils were familiar with practices of evaluating their own working and results.

### Objectives

1. Learning the principles of publishing, getting acquainted with existing web journals and practicing the work of editorial staff:
  - To understand various types and structures of articles;
  - Guided examination of existing web journals;
  - Learning to work on a shared object (a web journal) and to write collaboratively;
  - Learning to evaluate both the process and the outcomes of the work from one's own and the group's perspective.

2. Developing skills for creating and elaborating digital material:
  - Practicing process writing through writing journal articles: giving and getting feedback, developing the texts and evaluating the outcome.
  - Practicing digital photographing and image processing: Taking photos, moving the photos to computer, and choosing the photos from files.
  - Combining pictures and text in the publishing tool: Learning to use the publishing tool and uploading texts and pictures in it.
3. Getting acquainted with the principles and laws of copyright so that the pupils apply the principles when producing material on the web for themselves.
4. Evaluating and reflecting on the working practices so that pupils can receive and give feedback on the common outcome, working process and one's own contribution.

### 3. ICT tools

#### ***Magazine Factory***

Magazine Factory (<http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/>) is a publishing tool and web service, freely available in the web, where one can add texts and pictures in ready-made layout templates. There are two options in the layout templates: basic articles and image articles. The tool is, particularly, meant for school use: it is easy to use and it does not take much time to learn to use it. It has already been used in many schools around the world; therefore, there are several journals available made in other schools that pupils can examine as examples. The tool was a central tool used throughout the present project. The tool as such does not guide or structure pupils' work, it is the teacher's responsibility to plan and guide the phasing and progression of activities.

#### ***Interactive whiteboard***

In addition to the Magazine Factory tool, it would be very useful to have a presentation tool, like an interactive whiteboard in the present case, with which the phases of the process can be guided by the teacher, such as the examination of existing web journals, presentation of articles created by the students or the demonstration of using the tools. In the evaluation phase of the process, the interactive whiteboard was also used as a shared annotation space for evaluation comments. Also a beamer attached to a computer could be used instead of interactive whiteboard.

#### ***Digital camera***

In the present project, pupils took pictures in their articles using a digital camera. The guidance for using cameras was conducted during the project. The class had two cameras in their use.

### ***Notepad***

Pupils wrote their article texts using the Windows application Notepad, which is simple enough for the purpose. The program also automatically creates texts in the format of .txt, which the Magazine Factory tool applies. Texts can also be written directly by the Magazine Factory tool.

## **4. Organizational prerequisites and supporting factors**

### ***Premises***

In order to carry out the sequence in the described way, there should be a computer lab available with enough computers (one computer for each small group is enough). The computer lab used in the present project had also an interactive whiteboard. In addition, the pupils used other school premises, such as small conference rooms, for group work. Some feedback sessions between two groups were held in the school library. The making of the journal articles also required that pupils were able to go outside the school premises, depending on the topic of their article. For instance, one group made pancakes in one pupil's home; another group prepared an article by interviewing a saleswoman in a clothing shop; they were also allowed to borrow new fashion clothes for their pictures. The taking of photos for the articles may have required going outside the school premises also in other groups.

### ***Phasing the lessons***

The example project was conducted in a Finnish primary school where the same teacher teaches almost all lessons and subject domains. The computer lab had to be reserved in advance; therefore the working with computers was pre-planned into two-hour long lessons. In addition to them, pupils worked also during their free time, which sped up the completion of articles.

### ***Preparations***

In this approach, the teacher can create instructions and working areas gradually during the process; there is no need to have a lot of material or instructions ready in the beginning. Before the start of the sequence, the teacher has to make at least the following preparations:

- Reserve the school's computer lab and digital cameras for the necessary lessons;
- Order user accounts for the Magazine Factory service for each pupil;
- Create technical instructions for pupils about using the programs; laatia oppilaiden
- Create a publishing space for the new web journal in Magazine Factory (if an existing journal is not used).

## 5. Description/"Manuscript" of the sequence

The progression of the process is demonstrated in three videos that include the following phases:

- Video 1 *Technical guidance and an introduction to the task*
- Video 2 *Guiding the writing process*
- Video 3 *Guiding image processing and evaluation of the working process*

Only those central, challenging phases of the process are chosen in the videos that specifically require the teacher's guidance and scaffolding.

### ***Phase 1: Preparatory activities***

*Description of activity:* One lesson is conducted with the pupils about using a digital camera (the pupils can, e.g., take photos of each other). In addition, the teacher orders usernames and passwords for students in the Magazine Factory service. The user accounts are sent for students by email. All students get a status of editorial staff in the school's journal.

### ***Phase 2: Orientation to the task***

*Description of activity:* Examination of various kinds of existing web journals and their characteristics. The teacher introduces two examples for the pupils through the interactive white board. He has sent the web addresses of the example journals to the pupils by email. The pupils open the email message and get acquainted with the example journal in pairs or small groups, examining, e.g., what sections there are in the journals, how the journals look like, and what is their visual outlook. After the independent examination, one journal is evaluated together through the interactive whiteboard in a whole class discussion. After that, the teacher introduces the ways of working in the project and organizes small groups. Finally, the pupils open an email, sent by the Magazine Factory administrator, that includes a user account and password to the Magazine Factory service for each pupil and log into the tool.

*Work forms:* Whole class discussion led by the teacher; small group work.

*Extra/resources:* Magazine Factory tool; existing web journals produced by Magazine Factory; an email for each student, sent by the Magazine Factory administrator, including an user account to the service; an email sent beforehand by the teacher for each student, including web addresses of the example journals to be examined.



### ***Phase 3: Starting the group work***

*Description of activity:* Groups brainstorm three topics for possible journal articles; all suggested topics are listed in the interactive whiteboard by the teacher. The whole class discussion about the topics functions as an editorial staff meeting where the plans and agreements are made about what sections and pages the school journal will include (e.g., Main article, News, Sports, Camp school, Hobbies, School events, Interviews etc.). The teacher guides pupils to start planning their articles and demonstrates through the interactive whiteboard how to brainstorm the content of the article by constructing a mind map (using “Break time” as an example topic). Groups choose their topics and start creating ideas in a mind map.

*Work forms:* Whole class discussion led by the teacher; small group work.

*Extra/resources:* The teacher’s computer and an interactive white board; paper and pencil for each group.

### ***Phase 4: Creating texts through process writing***

*Description of activity:* The teacher guides pupils to write the first version of their journal article using the Windows application Notepad, and pupils start writing. The teacher walks around the classroom and advises groups in the use of Notepad when needed. Besides that, the teacher rehearses the basic techniques of text editing with the pupils. When the first versions of articles are ready, pupils comment on each others’ texts reciprocally between two groups by writing written comments in a printed text version and by giving oral feedback. After that, the groups continue finishing their articles taking into account the feedback.

*Work forms:* Small group work.

*Extra/resources:* A computer lab with a computer for each group.

*Notes/comments:* This phase continues according to each group’s own pace and progressing from this phase to the next is flexible.

### ***Phase 5: Taking pictures for the articles***

*Description of activity:* The teacher guides the groups (one or two groups at a time) to use a digital camera, after which the pupils leave for photographing independently. Likewise, the teacher guides one group at a time to move the photos from the camera to a computer and further to the publishing tool.

*Work forms:* Small group work.

*Extra/resources:* Two digital cameras; a computer lab with a computer for each group.

*Notes/comments:* This phase continues interlocked with the previous one so that each group is introduced to photographing when their article texts are ready. Especially during

the phases of writing and photographing, the pupils work for the project also in their free time.

### ***Phase 6: Publishing the articles***

*Description of activity:* The teacher advises each group at a time how to combine texts and photos as an article in the school's journal using the publishing program. When a group has completed the article text, the teacher shows how to move the text from Notepad to Magazine Factory using Copy- and Paste-commands. After that, the photos moved from the digital camera are pasted in appropriate places in the article.

*Work forms:* Small group work.

*Extra/resources:* A computer lab with a computer for each group.

*Notes/comments:* This phase continues interlocked with the previous two phases so that the teacher advises each group depending on when they texts and photos are ready.

### ***Phase 7: Evaluation***

*Description of activity:* First the pupils evaluate in small groups their own article and other articles (what could have been improved, what was successful). In a whole class discussion led by the teacher, each group tells their evaluation of their own work, after which other pupils give their feedback about each article. In addition, the whole working process is reflected on: pupils tell what aspects were good and what aspects could have been improved. The teacher writes pupils' comments on the interactive whiteboard as two lists: good aspects and to-be-improved aspects. In the end, each pupil evaluates his or her own contribution in the process in the following way: The teacher asks several evaluative questions (e.g., Who thinks that own contribution to the group work was adequate?) and pupils answer by raising a hand if the answer is 'yes' concerning their own activity.

*Work forms:* Small group work; whole class discussion led by the teacher.

*Extra/resources:* A computer lab with a computer at least for each group for reading the journal articles from the web.

## **6. Going one step further**

Publishing the web journal is intended to become an established practice for the pupils:

- The journal is changing and developing all the time and it is constantly available through the net. The articles stay readable for a long time, thus they can be recalled and re-examined also afterwards.
- The school's history is saved in the journal from the students' perspective.
- The school's activities become visible for all interested parties (e.g., parents are encouraged to read the articles) because the journal is openly available in the school's web pages.

In the present case, the teacher has a goal of spreading the project as a common journal for the whole school so that the journal is permanently available in the web. To actualize that, all the teachers in the school will be guided to make journal articles with their own pupils.

Another, a smaller scale idea, would be to make a common journal between two pupil groups, either inside one school or between two schools. Such a journal could concentrate on some specific theme or subject domain (e.g., some actual topic like elections, a theme related to nature, local children's culture, sports etc.).

A school journal may also be a mean to develop collaboration between schools and homes; e.g., parents can write stories that the students elaborate further as editors before they are published in the school's journal.

The publication of a web journal can further be practiced by international collaboration with pupil groups from other countries. Teachers can search for partners, for instance, through the eTwinning-portal (<http://www.etwinning.net/>).

## Annex 1. Screen shots from the Magazine Factory tool

The school journal of Koulumestari primary school, created in the described project, is available in the web in the following address:

<http://magazinefactory.srv.hosting.fi/magazines/Into/index.php>.

Figure 1 presents the editorial page of the journal (available at <http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/magazines/Into/index.php?str=52>).



Figure 1. Editorial page of the journal. The teacher is the chief editor of the journal. In the left bar are listed the different sections of the journal.

In Figure 2 is presented the contents of the on Home and school -section of the journal (the address of the page is <http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/magazines/Into/index.php?artCat=15>).

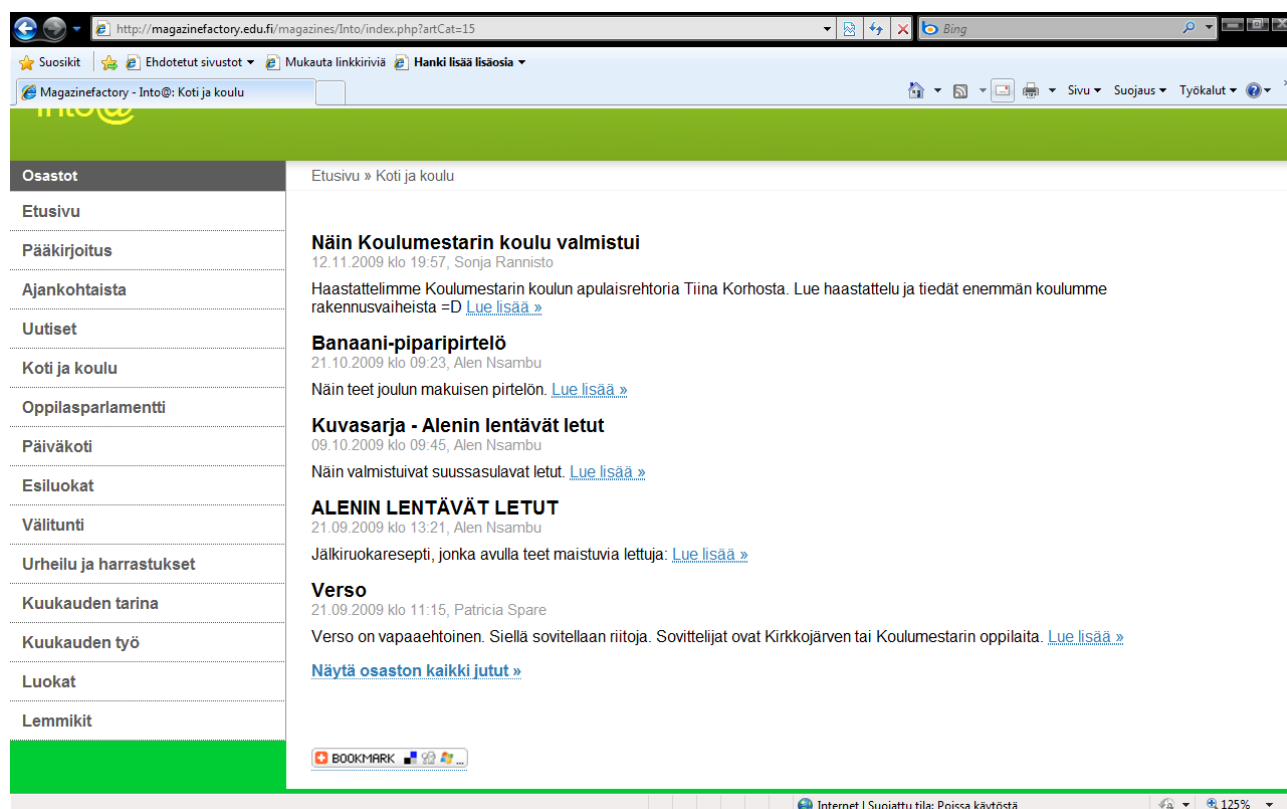


Figure 2. The contents of the “Home and school” section. The articles “Alenin lentävät letut” (“Flying pancakes by Alen”) and “Verso” (a text about pupils’ peer reconciliation) were produced during the present project.

In Figure 3 is the article about pupil's peer counseling (the story is available at <http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/magazines/Into/index.php?str=40&artCat=15&artID=8>)

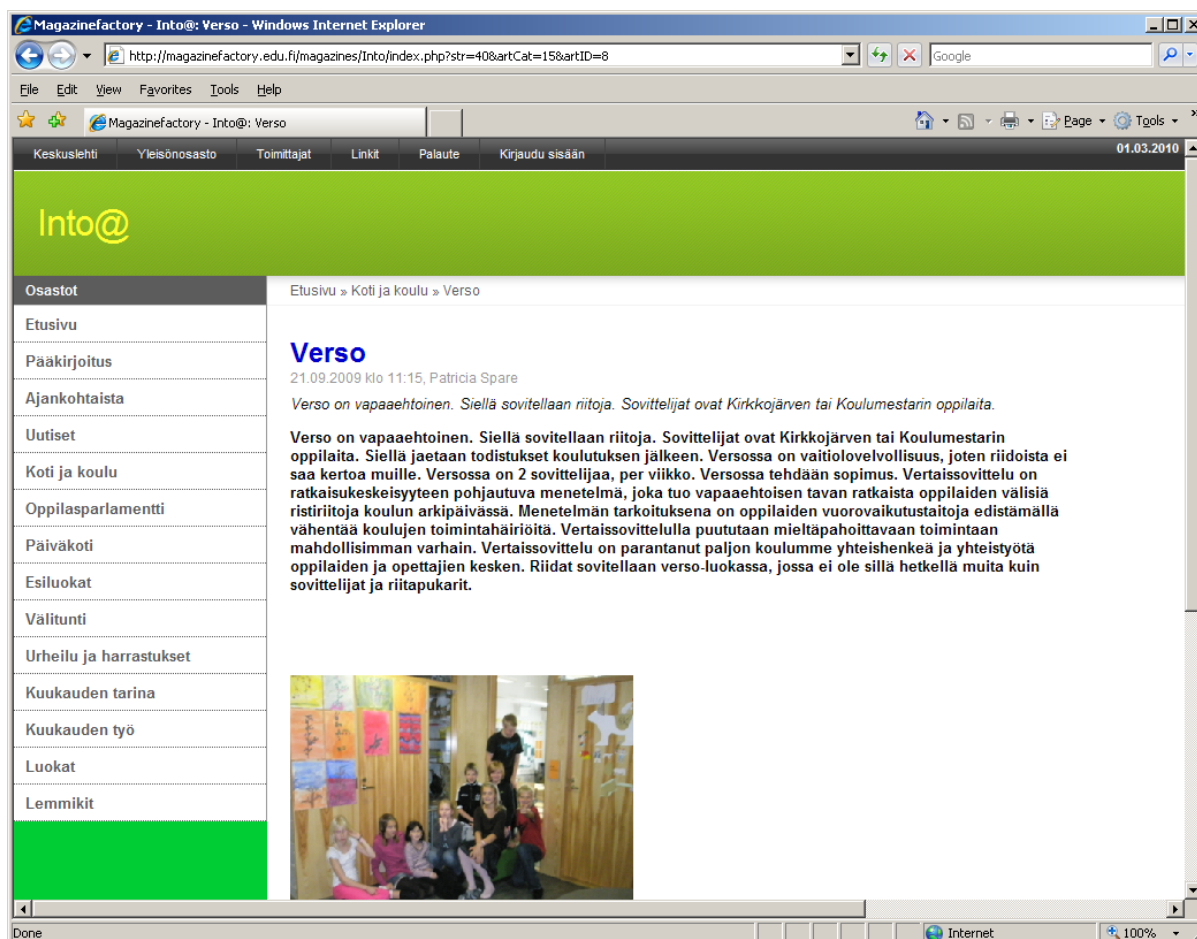


Figure 3. An article about Verso peer counselling. The pupils wrote the text and used the photo to enliven the story. The normal article template of Magazine Factory was used.

In Figure 4 is an article that includes a picture series about activities that pupils do during break times in the school (the story is available at <http://magazinefactory.edu.fi/magazines/Into/index.php?str=40&artCat=12&artID=9>).

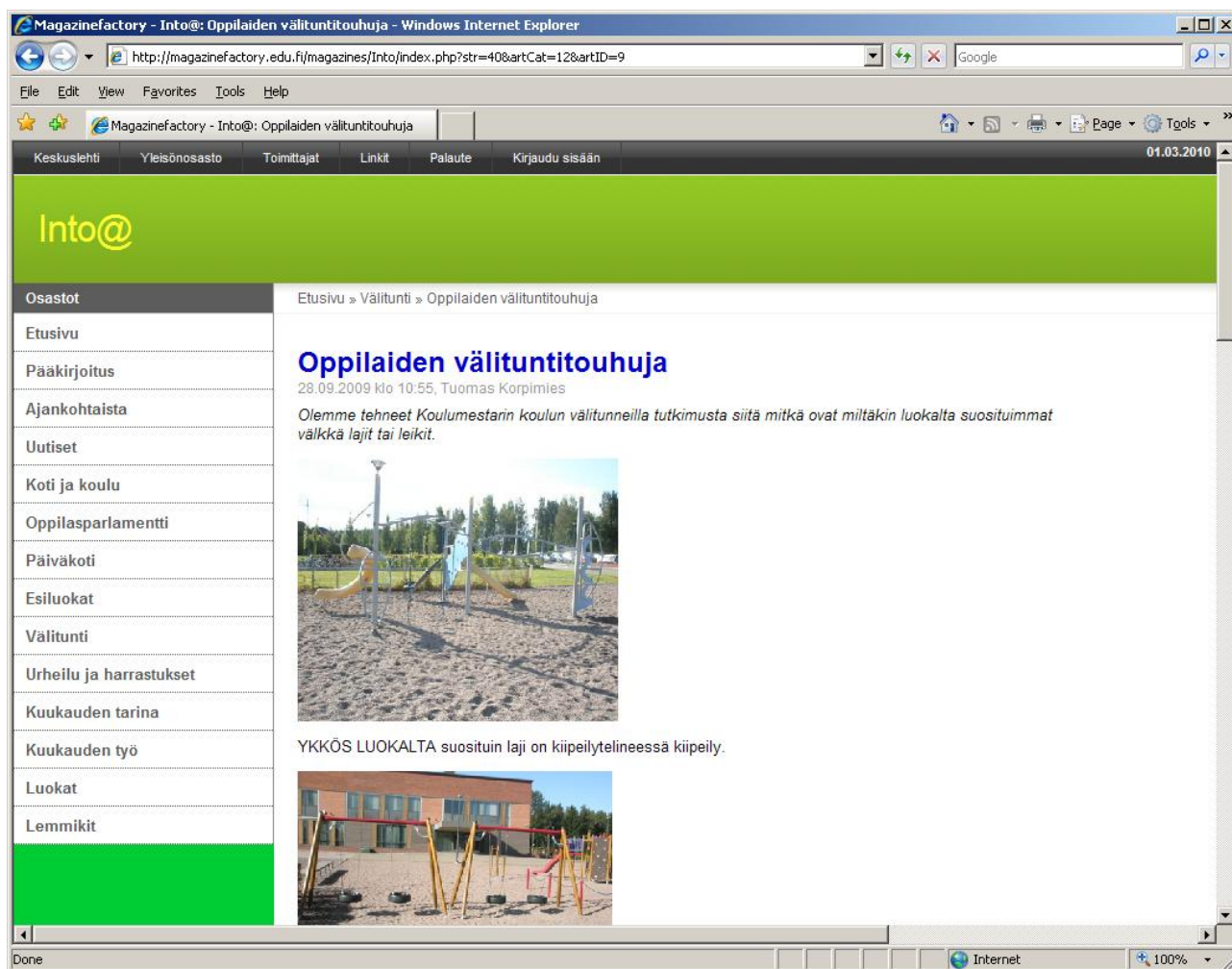


Figure 4. An article about pupils' activities during break times. The authors made first a questionnaire for the school's pupils about most popular activities during break times. Then they wrote an article about the results and enlivened the story by photos from the school courtyard.